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ABSTRACT

This 23-item bibliography includes a glossary of key terms and summarizes major works on the use of program evaluation information. Summarized works include books, papers presented at professional meetings, and doctoral dissertations. The summaries are organized around a framework of themes: studies of evaluation utilization, practical discussions of evaluation utilization, and theoretical suggestions. (Author/BW)

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EVALUATION UTILIZATION:

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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EVALUATION UTILIZATION: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY*

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*Readers are referred to "Evaluation Utilization: A Bibliography." Copies are available by writing Dr. Ellen Pechman, Director of Research and Evaluation, Orleans Parish School Board, 4100 Touro Street, New Orleans, LA 70122; the bibliography has also been submitted to ERIC.

Glossary of Key Terms

Evaluability assessment- A process for determining in advance the likelihood of an evaluation's success. It consists of two stages: first, an examination of program characteristics and second, an evaluation feasibility analysis. See the entry for Rutman, L., Planning useful evaluations.

Evaluation- The "process that involves (a) posing questions about the purpose, implementation and consequences of . . . programs, and (b) systematically collecting and analyzing data concerning those questions, where both of these activities are intended to facilitate judgment about the worth of such programs" (Weiner, Rubin, and Sachse, p.1). An evaluation report, often referred to as an evaluation, is the product of an evaluation.

Modes of use- Using various labels, theorists have distinguished three modes of use for evaluation results: instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic (See Caplan et al., 1975; Knorr, 1977; Rich, 1977; Weiner, Rubin, & Sachse, 1977; Weiss, 1977; and Pelz, 1978).

Instrumental or allocative use refers to a case where an action is taken in direct response to the results of an evaluation. Implicit in the term is an input-output model of organizational behavior; either the results suggest a needed change and the decision-maker makes it, or they provide support for the status quo and no change is needed.

In contrast, conceptual or appreciative use refers to cases where evaluation results influence decision-makers' current thinking about (and potentially their future action regarding) an issue or program. Rich (1977) labels this "knowledge for understanding" as opposed to the instrumental "knowledge for action."

A third type of use has little to do with the actual content of the evaluation results. Symbolic or legitimative use refers to cases where evaluation results are used indirectly for a variety of purposes, for example, to garner political support, to substitute for a decision, or to discredit a disliked policy. Knowing their desired action, decision-makers may seize on the results and manipulate them to a desired end. Clearly, any given evaluation can be used in all of these ways, especially in active settings where there are numerous decision-makers and information users.

Personal factor- The presence of at least one person in an evaluation study who cares about the process and using its results. See the entry for Patton, M.Q. et al., In search of impact.

Utilization- An instance of utilization occurs when evaluation information is considered by someone as an influence in "making decisions, substantiating previous decisions or actions, or establishing or altering attitudes" about any of a variety of items (adapted from Alkin, Daillak & White, p.232). Two views of utilization exist currently: a mainstream view that looks for the specific impact of an evaluation on subsequent decisions; and an alternative view that examines the numerous direct and indirect

effects an evaluation can have on an organization (See "Modes of use" above). Weiss (1979) suggests that the term utilization be dropped in favor of the simpler and equally apt term use.

Utilization-focused evaluation- An evaluation designed to insure that its results will be put to use. As discussed by M.Q. Patton, there are two essential requirements: first, identifying and involving relevant decision-makers and information users; and second, being "active, reactive and adaptive" in working with these users. See the entry for Patton, M.Q., Utilization-focused evaluation.

An important early piece.

Weiss, C. H. Utilization of evaluation: Toward comparative study. In C. H. Weiss (Ed.), Evaluating action programs: Readings in social action and education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972, 318-326.

If evaluation results are not used to make program decisions, Weiss writes, then evaluation has "failed in its major purpose." Two types of limitations lead to the non-utilization of results: first, the numerous and complex organizational factors that tend to work against the implementation of results; and second, the then current state of evaluation practice.

This seminal paper, originally presented in 1966, proposes empirical study of evaluation to enhance the utilization of results. To Weiss, research on evaluation should examine three major types of use: use within ongoing programs (what we would now call formative evaluation); use at the completion of programming cycles (summative evaluation); and use in outside agencies. Weiss suggests potential and testable ways for conducting evaluations to enhance their utilization: first by explicating the theoretical framework of programs; second, by creating a "process model" of programs; and third, by analyzing the effectiveness of specific program components, rather than programs as a whole. Other areas she labels for study include the targeting of evaluation results on potential users, the involvement of administrators and other program participants in the evaluation, the timely completion and release of evaluation results, and effective methods of communicating and disseminating results.

Studies of evaluation utilization.

Alkin, M. C., Daillak, R., & White, P. Using evaluations: Does evaluation make a difference? Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979.

Alkin, Daillak, and White distinguish two views of evaluation utilization: a mainstream view that looks for the specific impact of an evaluation on subsequent decisions; and a broader, alternative view that examines the numerous direct and indirect effects an evaluation can have on an organization. The consensus that evaluation results are not being used may be due to the bias of the mainstream perspective; in reality, evaluation results may already be influencing programs, but in more subtle ways than the search for static factors affecting utilization would suggest.

The case studies presented here examine the "interaction of people and situations in the evaluation process" (p. 26, italics in original). Using a naturalistic research strategy, Alkin and his colleagues pieced together case studies of five completed evaluations. Participants in the evaluations were interviewed, in some cases several times, and they then read and corrected the finished descriptions. Also included were the participants' final reactions and responses to the experience. Although in only one case was the utilization consonant with the mainstream definition, evaluation utilization did in fact occur in each case, lending support to the alternative view of utilization.

In their final chapter, Alkin, Daillak, and White summarize support for this broader, alternative definition of utilization having demonstrated that the use of the mainstream approach inherently limits the results. They name four essential components of utilization--1) evaluation information must be communicated; 2) an "appropriate user" must be evident; 3) the information must be labeled a single input or one of several; and 4) the information must be used in some way--and define an "instance of the utilization of local school program evaluation"

as

> Evaluation information considered by a local client, sanctioned local users, or external users as a dominant influence, one of multiple influences, or one of multiple, cumulative influences in making decisions, substantiating previous decisions or actions, or establishing or altering attitudes related to establishment, external funding, local district funding, continuance of a component, curriculum/instructional methods, administrative/personnel operations, or community acceptance of the local school program (p. 232).

Clearly certain characteristics of evaluation situations are associated with the utilization of results, and, based on their case study results, Alkin et al. develop an analytic framework consisting of the following eight factors: preexisting evaluation bounds; orientation of the users; evaluator's approach; evaluator's credibility; organizational factors; extraorganizational factors; information content and reporting; and administrator style. They point to the need for further focused studies in the development of a theory of evaluation utilization.

Lyon, C. D., Doscher, L., McGranahan, P., and Williams, R. Evaluation and school districts. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Evaluation, 1978.

The Evaluation and School Districts Project at UCLA's Center for the Study of Evaluation was designed to "identify and analyze educational evaluation at the local educational agency (LEA) level" (p. 1). This report presents the results of a 1978 survey of evaluation characteristics and practices in over 200 districts that enroll 10,000 or more students and that have an organizational unit formally responsible for program evaluation. Also reported are the results of related fieldwork.

Many of the results have implications for the utilization of evaluations in public schools. Evaluation in these large districts is an in-house activity. School district personnel, rather than external consultants, do the major share of evaluation office work, and contrary to popular belief, these units are primarily supported by local funds, not federal or state monies. Although little agreement exists on what constitutes basic evaluation practice or on what evaluation activities deserve priority, evaluation in these units frequently means achievement testing: roughly 75% say that "student achievement is the dominant topic of data collection" (p. 76); and an equal percentage say that "testing is their major method of data collection" (p. 79).

The relation of such evaluation to improved instruction is tenuous, especially given the organizational position of many units. Rather than reporting directly to the superintendent, evaluation units are more likely to be in one of the typical lines of authority (e.g. Instruction or Administration); however, 62% of the offices are not located in the Instructional line. Development activities in these offices generally center on tests and evaluation instruments, rather than on instructional programs and products. This is partly explained by looking at the clientele of the average unit: roughly 60% of the time is spent with

administrators compared to only 40% with instructional clients. Reflecting these results, one of the propositions to be investigated in further project research is that "evaluation offices are not greatly involved in managing educational activities" (p. 32).

Two thirds of the evaluation heads responding feel that their personnel resources are inadequate, and, asked what would improve their units' effectiveness, they generally identify "additional staff," "increased access to computer time and programs," and "information about effective school district evaluation practices," rather than, for example, organizational changes or increased communications (p. 112, 114). Interestingly, most respondents report low-ambiguous, low-conflict experiences in their work (p. 115) despite their presumed involvement in highly political contexts.

Meltsner, A. J. Policy Analysts in the Bureaucracy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Based on interviews with 116 federal policy analysts, Meltsner conceptualizes a typology of evaluators. He argued that evaluators may be differentiated primarily by how much political and analytical skill they have.

Political skill refers to the ability to exercise influence over various forms of decision-making. "Entrepreneurs" are exceptionally able on both skill dimensions. "Technicians" have good analytical skill but less political skill, "Politicians" have good political strive but their technical skills are below average. "Pretenders" are weak on both skill dimensions.

This typology may correspond to stereotypes which both administrators and evaluators employ in predicting or understanding behavior. Thus, if several theorists are correct in arguing that the personal factor is a primary determinant of use, this typology may partly explain important dynamics of evaluator-administrator interaction. Meltsner also offers a typology of clients. His work also includes recommendations for optimizing evaluation use; for example, he recommends that evaluators target evaluations toward specific administrators. This work is similar to Patton's (1978) in flavor, and complements related works which have examined use in related evaluation areas such as health programs or local educational agencies.

Newman, D. L., Brown, R. D., & Braskamp, L. A. Communication theory and the utilization of evaluation. In Braskamp, L. A. & Brown, R. D. (Eds.), Utilization of evaluation information. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980.

This review article summarizes a "five-year series of studies which has systematically examined the relationship among the characteristics of an evaluator, an evaluation report, evaluation audience characteristics, and audience responses" (p. 30). Braskamp, Brown, Newman, and other associates have asked subjects, nearly 1200 in all, representing a variety of evaluation audiences, to read and respond to simulated evaluation reports. Although the generalizability of such studies can be questioned, the results suggest several important points concerning the utilization of evaluation results.

First, both the title and sex of the evaluator can affect audience reactions. Even though readers read identical reports, they rated those they thought written by a "researcher" as significantly more objective than those written by an "evaluator" or a "content (art) specialist." Report readers were less likely to agree with reports which they thought were written by female evaluators when the field differed from their own; in their own field, they were less critical of the female's results, although they were still more likely to agree with the male evaluator's recommendations.

Second, the use of jargon and data can affect audience ratings of technicality and difficulty. The report rated most difficult by readers included jargon, but no data support. "Generally, reports containing both jargon and data were rated more useful regardless of whether the readers were professionals in the field or were lay persons from another field" (p. 33). Rated next highest were reports lacking both jargon and data use, suggesting an interaction of the use or non-use of jargon and data in the reactions of readers. The type of information included in reports also affected decision-makers.

Third, audience characteristics can make a difference in reader reactions. Ratings of the usefulness of the results of an external evaluation differed depending on the organizational position of the audience. Other important variables were the level of professional experience and the field of the reader. Also involved is the "audience's perceived need for evaluative information in a particular area" (p. 33).

The authors suggest the need for continued research in the area of communication and attribution theory, including the effect of informal evaluation reports on decision-makers and the degree of audience understanding of the material being assessed. They point further to the need for similar observations in more natural settings.

Patton, M. Q., Grimes, P. S., Guthrie, K. M., Brennan, N. J., Grench, B. D. and Blyth, D. A. In search of impact: An analysis of the utilization of federal health evaluation research. In T. D. Cook and Associates (Eds.), Evaluation studies review annual, Volume 3. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978.

This chapter summarizes the follow-up study Patton and his associates conducted of 20 federal health program evaluations. For each evaluation, two key figures were interviewed: the evaluator with major responsibility for the evaluation; and the person selected by the project officer as the key decision-maker. Open-ended questions allowed the respondents to define and discuss utilization in "personally meaningful terms." They were then asked to comment on the importance of 11 factors which the literature suggested should affect utilization (methodological quality, methodological appropriateness, timeliness, lateness of report, positive/negative findings, surprise of findings, central/peripheral program objectives evaluated, presence/absence of related studies, political factors, government/evaluation interactions, and resources available for the study).

In contrast to the popular feeling that evaluation results are underutilized, Patton et al. found that results were in fact being used, but not in the general sense of having an "immediate and concrete effect on specific decisions and program activities" (p. 143). Instead, evaluation results provided the decision-makers one additional piece of information, "thereby permitting some reduction in the uncertainty within which any federal decisionmaker inevitably operates" (p. 145, italics in original).

Evaluators and decision-makers identified as important to the utilization process only one factor from the list of 11 suggested by the literature: a political considerations factor, as might be expected. The ten remaining factors were not mentioned consistently by the respondents, and the importance of these

variables for utilization was thus called into question. The only other factor identified by these practitioners as important was a factor not on the original list, one which Patton and his associates labeled the personal factor. The personal factor emerged from the interviews as the frequently repeated comment that in cases where evaluation utilization occurred, it was largely due to the presence of a person who cared about the evaluation and its results; without the personal factor, underutilization could be expected.

The implications of these results for evaluators are striking; to see that results are used, evaluators need to consider both the political context of the evaluations they conduct and the need for the one person who will make things happen, both during and after the evaluation. Equally striking are the implications for evaluation researchers, who first need to reconsider the narrow definition of utilization which ignores political realities of real-world decision-making and who also need to study the newly identified personal factor with care.

Several recent doctoral dissertations have addressed the question of evaluation utilization.

1. Carlson, P. The relationship of three organizational variables on the utilization of evaluation (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1973). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1974, 34 7097A (University Microfilms No. 74-10, 924).

Carlson studied the relationship of utilization, as measured by a self-developed index, and three variables: the clarity of organizational goals and objectives; the number of individuals necessary for approval of a recommendation; and the status of the evaluator. Positive relationships existed between utilization and clarity and between utilization and the internal status of the evaluator. No such relationship was found between utilization and the number of individuals needed for approval. A factor analysis of the utilization index suggested the existence of three factors: reliance on traditional forms of evaluation (product evaluation); reliance on previous experience, intuition, or familiar materials; and negativism toward evaluation.

2. Granville, A.C. Where do school decisions really come from? (Doctoral dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1977). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1977, 38, 743A (University Microfilms No. 77-16, 166).

In an empirical study, Granville asked 157 elementary and secondary principals to read evaluation reports differing on three variables: the information source, the suggested implications for adoption, and the type of program. He then measured their inclination to adopt the program described and collected naturalistic data on 14 other principals. The following conclusions were reached:

(1) In addition to objective evidence, social and political factors influence organizational decisions;

(2) Objective factors are more influential under unusual conditions;

(3) Decision-makers in organizations of different sizes are differentially responsive to influence;

(4) The social influence of people is in part determined by the degree

to which decisions will affect them; and

(5) Individuals' political influence is determined in part by the extent to which they control resource allocation.

3. Andrews, J.V. Reactions to program evaluation: A qualitative analysis (Doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1979). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1979, 39, 6717A (University Microfilms No. 79-10, 731).

Andrews' six case studies of recent evaluations included 27 participant interviews. Nine themes for future research were extracted from these interviews, including the question of the sizable impact of prior knowledge and beliefs on evaluation, of the importance program personnel attach to being participants, and of one's role in the organization.

4. Dickey, P. Utilization of evaluations of small scale educational projects (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1979). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1979, 40, 3245A (University Microfilms No. 79-26, 115).

To determine factors affecting the utilization of 47 completed Title IVC evaluations, Dickey interviewed project directors, read final evaluation reports, and collected archival data. She concluded that the likely explanation of underutilization lies in factors related to the natural resistance to change and to the dissimilarity of the academic and real worlds, rather than to a technically impoverished state of evaluation art. (See also Dickey, B., Utilization of evaluations of small-scale innovative educational projects, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 2,6, 1980, 65-77).

5. Gray, P.J. The development and testing of a collaborative approach to education program evaluation (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, 1979). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1980, 40, 4966A (University Microfilms No. 80-5, 767).

In his dissertation Gray developed a collaborative approach to program evaluation involving the evaluator with evaluation audiences. The approach

was reviewed by a graduate class and practicum, by public school personnel, and by evaluation specialists.

6. Weeks, E. C. Factors affecting the utilization of evaluation findings in administrative decision-making (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1979). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1979, 40, 457A (University Microfilms No. 79-15, 920).

This study sought to identify which of three variables correlated most highly with utilization. The variables studied were the organizational location of the evaluator; the decision-making context; and the methodological practices employed. The negative correlation between research design and utilization suggests that decision-makers have a slight preference for more qualitative forms of data analysis.

Haenn, J. F. Reasons why evaluations and testing don't inform. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, 1980.

Reviewing the literature, Haenn discusses three sets of factors which inhibit information use. The first are organization characteristics; the structure, climate, and politics of organizations may limit the effective utilization of information. A second type inhibiting factors are the personal characteristics of users, whose information needs, interests, and abilities may affect the use of information. The third set of factors encompasses methodological characteristics of evaluations and reporting, including both the role of the evaluation and the characteristics of its reporting. Haenn summarizes his review of the literature by noting that "the literature is filled with reasons why information may not be effectively utilized" (p. 9).

Following discussion of these factors, Haenn presents a similar model of local school district influences on the use of evaluation and testing information. Organizational characteristics are divided into those that are relatively static (e.g. the size and complexity of the organization) and those that are more easily modified (e.g. interpersonal characteristics and evaluation credibility). Personal characteristics subject to modification include users' attitudes toward evaluation, their problem solving capability, and their commitment to use. The methodological characteristics of evaluation and especially of evaluation reporting are also part of the influence model.

Having presented potential reasons why evaluation and testing do not inform, Haenn then gives three strategies for facilitating their use. First, creating demand--for example, through "establishing a climate reflecting the value of evaluation and testing information" (p. 12) or through employee training techniques--helps insure that users will welcome evaluation information. Second, increased cooperation between the producers and users of evaluations can have a similar

effect. This cooperation can be encouraged, for example, by providing technical assistance or by increasing interpersonal communication. Third, improving reporting procedures can also facilitate the use of evaluation results.

Three papers by F. M. Holley and her associates:

1. Lee, A. M. & Holley, F. M. Communicating evaluation information: Some practical tips that work. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, 1978.

In this highly readable paper, Ann Moore Lee and Freda Holley give advice on how to disseminate evaluation results. Their practical communication principles cover six topics: evaluation audiences; the evaluation message; the written medium; verbal presentations; difficult audiences; and working with the press. Included among the tips are such things as relating the evaluation information to action which must be taken, starting reports with the most important information, and training the press to properly interpret evaluation data.

2. Holley, F. M. Catch a falling star: Promoting the utilization of research and evaluation findings. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1979.

Written on a more theoretical level, this paper has as its premise that researchers and evaluators must accept responsibility for promoting the utilization of their results. Holley presents the following framework of utilization factors: characteristics of the thing evaluated; characteristics of the evaluation user; characteristics of the organization; characteristics of the evaluator; characteristics of the evaluation findings; and dissemination resources available to the evaluator. Then, using an imaginary case study, she describes how these factors affect the behavior of an evaluator conducting an evaluation, ending happily in the results' being used. By taking concrete action toward utilization, she writes, evaluators can help improve the use of evaluation information.

3. Holley, F. M. Evaluation utilization: Is it easier to move a mountain than a molehill? A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, 1980.

The major claim in this paper is that the potential utilization of any

evaluation is heavily influenced by the political context in which it is conducted, and that, knowing that, evaluators should use potential utilization as a key criterion in the allocation of evaluation dollars. In other words, evaluators should tackle district mountains which have a high probability of being moved and ignore more interesting molehills, unless and until they too grow into peaks. To support this claim, Holley discusses an example of the utilization of a staff development program in the Austin Independent School District, noting the tremendous amount of effort required to get evaluation results used.

Patton, M. Q. Utilization-focused evaluation. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978.

Patton's book is a reaction to the widely accepted conclusion that evaluation results are un- or at least under-utilized. The implicit definition in earlier work on utilization required an "immediate, concrete, and observable effect on specific decisions and program activities" (p. 24). This definition is inappropriate, writes Patton, since evaluation research is merely one piece of information affecting the development of programs in actual settings. Summarizing an earlier empirical study in which he participated (Patton et al., 1975), he notes that in that study, 78% of the decision-makers interviewed and 90% of the evaluators felt that evaluation had had some effect on the examined programs. Evaluations are utilized, but not necessarily in ways evident to researchers seeking obvious and direct effects.

Recognizing that evaluations are inherently political, utilization-focused evaluation has as its central concern what an evaluator can do to insure that evaluation results will be used. There are two essential requirements: first, the relevant decision-makers and information users must be identified and take an active part in the evaluation; and second, the evaluators must be "active, reactive, and adaptive" in working with these users. The "personal factor" identified in Patton's earlier work pointed to a basic principle of evaluation utilization: where at least one person with authority cares about the evaluation, the results are more likely to be used. For this reason, utilization-focused evaluation uses an interactive process involving this person (or persons) and the evaluator. Focusing the evaluation question, establishing goals, and selecting design and data collection methods--all involve the evaluator working collaboratively with the decision-maker/information user.

The utilization-focused evaluator helps to establish and then test the causal

model upon which the program is based, using an "inductive, pragmatic, and highly concrete" approach. Data that have high face validity for the users are collected, and the results should not be surprising because of the collaborative nature of the entire evaluation process. The value of the results of a utilization-focused evaluation lies in their usefulness, i.e. the extent to which they tell the decision-maker what to do next. Given this, the results will have their desired impact.

Rutman, L. Planning useful evaluations. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980.

The topic of Rutman's book is evaluability assessment, a process for determining in advance the likelihood of an evaluation's success. Developed initially by Joseph Wholey and associates at the Urban Institute, evaluability assessment focuses first on program characteristics and then on the feasibility of conducting an evaluation study as planned.

An evaluability assessment begins by examing characteristics of program components to determine how close they come to the ideal, asking if they are well-defined and capable of being implemented in a prescribed manner; if goals and effects are clearly specified; and if plausible causal connections link goals and effects. In this stage, the evaluator develops three models of the program: first, a "program documents model," which shows the casual links described in program materials; second, a "program manager's model," which modifies the first model according to information from key decision makers; and, finally, an "evaluable program model," which presents the evaluator's views of what components can appropriately be evaluated.

Because the purpose of the evaluation determines its methodological requirements, the second stage of the evaluability assessment, the feasibility analysis, begins by determining the purpose(s) of the given evaluation, then looks at the constraints on the evaluation to see to what extent the research requirements can be met. Considered in the feasibility analysis are program design and implementation, information requirements, and research design. Its product is a list, based on the evaluable program model, of the program components and the goals and effects to be studied in the ultimate evaluation. The program evaluation, when it is finally conducted, benefits from the limits set during the two stages of the evaluability assessment; only what can and should be evaluated will be

evaluated.

Programs themselves can also benefit from evaluability assessment. Before the program evaluation begins and as a by-product of the evaluability assessment process, program managers may make changes in the program to enhance its evaluability. Strategies may include analyzing problems; specifying outcomes; assessing program design and implementation; and facilitating program development (what Rutman calls "formative research").

The benefits of conducting evaluability assessments, then, fall into two categories. First, evaluability assessments facilitate evaluation planning by establishing priorities, by providing "front-end control" over the evaluation process, and by allowing a wise allocation of evaluation dollars. Second, they facilitate planning by providing information on appropriate directions for program managers.

Conner, R.F. Measuring the utilization of evaluation findings: Description and critique of different techniques. Unprinted mimeo, University of California, Irvine, 1980.

In this revision of a 1979 Evaluation Research Society paper, Conner discusses the research methodology used in six utilization studies: Weiss and Bucuvalas (1977 and forthcoming); Knorr (1977); Patton et al. (1975); Alkin, Daillak, and White (1979); Heiss (1974); and Burt, Fisk, and Hatry (1972). He proposes a four part evaluation model consisting of goals, inputs, processes, and outcomes, then makes comparisons using the categories of basis of judgments, time orientation of judgments, subjects, measurement method, definition of use, and foci of study.

Conner concludes that more studies of the ongoing (as opposed to the retrospective) process of evaluation utilization are needed, along with studies involving higher level decision-makers. He further suggests both more systematic quantitative study of utilization and continued qualitative work. Finally, he feels that utilization goals and inputs deserve more careful attention than they have yet received.

Weiner, S.S., Rubin, D., & Sachse, T. Pathology in institutional structures for evaluation and a possible cure. Stanford, CA: Stanford Evaluation Consortium, 1977.

Weiner, Rubin, and Sachse write that two reasons are generally given to explain why evaluation results are underused. The first explanation is that the results are of low quality, suggesting a need for an improved technical or scientific evaluation craft. In recent years, the wisdom of this claim, with its reliance on an assumed organizational rationality, has been called into question. The second explanation, sometimes called the Two Communities Theory, is that policy makers and evaluators live in worlds so different that the results of social science style evaluations can have little impact in the real world of decision-making. Discussing governmental contracted evaluations, this paper supports the second notion, but gives a related and, in a sense, more basic reason for the failure of evaluation.

Rather than trying to suggest a change in the behavior of selected policy makers and evaluators, Weiner, Rubin, and Sachse suggest that the structure and relations of the institutions involved need to be changed. Following two unusual examples of useful evaluations, they discuss three sets of constraints--organizational constraints, political constraints, and the "prevailing views of professionally legitimate activity"--in addition to assumed constraints "imposed by the limitations of available methodology." They note that

> Attempts to increase evaluative influence which focus on a few of these factors in isolation and which do not recognize the highly complex and interactive system of forces constraining evaluator activity are likely to fail to alter the overall effects of the system (p.23).

Their proposed solution would alter the institutional system for governmentally funded external evaluations.

Under the new system, "operational feedback" provided by locally sponsored formative evaluations would create "direct and short-range improvements in specific programs." More diffuse, long-range feedback, focusing on the conceptual use of evaluation results (what they call the "appreciative" use), would be provided by "issue area evaluators" hired directly by funding agencies. The benefits of the proposed system would derive first from the involvement of the formative evaluation contractors in the political milieu of the programs they evaluate, while at the same time relieving them of agency-imposed norms. Panels of issue area evaluators, representing both policymakers and evaluators, would, on the other hand, be freed of political and funding constraints, focusing instead on broad public policy issues over a period of time.

Weiss, C. H. Conceptual issues in measuring the utilization of research and evaluation. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evaluation Research Society, Minneapolis, 1979.

Although research utilization sounds like a "straightforward and obvious event," in practice the interaction between evaluation results and the acts of program managers can be varied and complex. Weiss presents five general cases where this complexity may create problems: 1) evaluation studies that do not produce clearcut answers; 2) studies that provide conflicting results; 3) studies whose results cannot be implemented for whatever reason; 4) studies where evaluation results are only one type of information available to the decision-maker; and 5) studies where managers have survival rather than effectiveness on their minds.

The conventional approach to studying utilization is limited both because it has typically focused on instrumental uses, i.e. on the explicit use of certain evaluation results, and because it has implicitly assumed that use is good and non-use bad. This perspective is inappropriate given the complexities of organizational life. Taking a broader view of use, however, what evaluation research can do is to elaborate the context in which evaluation decisions are made and to provide, once numerous studies are available, generalizations about the theory underlying a program. Researchers have demonstrated empirically that the conceptual use of evaluation is
more prevalent than the instrumental use described above. Weiss feels that a use continuum exists, with conceptual and instrumental the extremes, and most evaluation uses of interest lying somewhere in the middle.

The definition of a "use" is clearly a central issue for the study of evaluation uses. Specifically, researchers must determine what is used, how directly the study itself is used, who uses it, how many people use it, how immediately it is used, and how much effect is required to count as a use. An accepted and standard definition will be of use in developing a cumulative

understanding of evaluation use in the organizational context.

Given an agreed-upon definition of use, researchers also need to examine the approaches to their subject to determine which approach makes the most sense for a given question. Weiss discusses four possibilities: 1) following the effects of selected studies on subsequent decisions; 2) talking with prospective users of studies; 3) examining the ways an issue has been treated; and 4) studying the effects of research and evaluation on selected organizations. Appropriate questions and methods of study differ for each of these approaches, as do the associated limitations.

Wise, R. I. What we know about the decision-maker and decision settings. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, 1978.

In this paper Wise places the blame for the underutilization of evaluation results on the evaluation community's normative view of how decisions ought to be made, i.e. the improper assumption that decision-makers in the real world should act according to a restrictive definition of rationality. Reviewing five different models of the strategies decision-makers use, Wise writes that the disjointed incrementalism model described by Braybrook and Lindbloom is our "best current answer to the question of what we know about decision-makers and decision making" (p. 21). In this model, decision-makers are seen as focusing on a never-ending series of immediate problems, making continual but relatively small changes in the status quo.

Wise presents three implications of this model for evaluators. First, evaluators need to address all actors involved in programs, i.e. stakeholders, influencers, and adoptors. Second, to influence decision-making, evaluators must involve themselves in immediate programs and proposals for dealing with such problems. Third, they must use information and arguments that reflect an understanding of both the problem and the alternative proposals. He concludes, "The direction of these alternative premises is away from an ideology based on the notion of a client with a need for information to make a decision at a particular time," suggesting that if an evaluation utilization problem exists, it may well exist in the prescriptive view of evaluators unable to "see their information being used in the incrementalism of real-world decision-making" (pp. 23-24). Wise's view provides additional theoretical support for the alternative view of utilization given in Alkin, Daillak, and White (1979).